

THE POTENTIAL OF SUSTAINABLE BUILDING RATING SYSTEM IN THE MALAYSIAN BUILDING INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

A cursory glance at recent news headlines reveals growing problems in the Malaysian built environment, e.g., landslides, floods, environmental pollutions etc. On another front, the recent energy crisis also demands a re-look into the way we design, construct and operate our buildings. Various measures such as policies, regulations and environmental programmes have been adopted by the Malaysian government to resolve these issues; but these problems continue to exist. There is a growing acknowledgement throughout the world that a sustainable approach is a much-needed panacea to the many environmental crises. In the building industry, many countries around the world have introduced building assessment, rating and labeling systems to evaluate the environmental or sustainability performance of a building or development as one of the solutions. However, there is yet to be such effort in Malaysia. This paper explores the potential success of introducing and implementing SBRS (Sustainable Building Rating System) in Malaysia by using Trudgill's AKTESP (Agreement, Knowledge, Technology, Economic, Social and Political) framework which identifies a number of common challenges for a better environment. The challenges are identified through existing literature, government initiatives and surveys. The paper concludes by suggesting some measures how these challenges might be overcome to ensure the success of SBRS in Malaysia.

Keywords: building industry; sustainable building rating system; barriers; market change mechanisms; policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1992 Earth Summit sustainable development has taken universal prominence for future development worldwide. Malaysia, experiencing severe

disasters caused by such calamities as hillside landslides, mudslides and flood during the past decade, has been confronted with several crucial environmental problems and sustainability issues. The recently announced three economic development corridors, namely Iskandar Development Region (IDR), Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) and Eastern Corridor Economic Region (ECER) will further add huge pressure to the environment if they are not approached in sustainable manner. Therefore, the adoption of sustainable development in the Malaysian building industry is timely and very crucial.

To ensure sustainable development is pursued by the building industry, Larsson (2000) suggested four categories of measures which ought to be taken by government and private sectors, namely 1) regulations, 2) enabling mechanisms i.e. education & training programmes, 3) financial incentive programmes, and 4) measures to change market demand. A number of these measures have been adopted by the Malaysian government including policies, regulations and programmes. However, they are still inadequate to mitigate the problems mentioned above. This is reflected in the climate change report card where Malaysia is ranked 55 out of 56 nations assessed for efforts to mitigate global warming (Williams and Dair, 2007).

Studies have shown that a national system of sustainable building rating system (SBRS) is among the most effective measures to shift market demand (Larsson, 2000; Cole, 2005). In other words, the desired end state of building industry is to ensure that the market demands buildings that are high performance or sustainable. SBRS is conceived as being voluntary and motivational in its application and their current success can be either taken as a measure of how proactive the building industry is in creating positive change or its responsiveness to market demand. Through the design and implementation of suitable SBRS, professionals, contractors and building owners can be motivated to pursue set targets for achievements and recognitions. By doing so it fulfil national and global objectives towards sustainable development.

